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TASKS OF POLISH VETERINARY PARASITOLOGY

Prof-Dr Witold Stefanski

One of the tasks of the veterinary subsection of the Polish Scientific Congress is to outline projects related to parasitology in the fields of physiology, biochemistry, chemistry, pharmacology, and toxicology. The shortage of biochemical personnel precludes their employment for veterinary problems. However, parasitology will undoubtedly call on the aid of zoology.

For the control of liver staggers (motylica watroby) among sheep, more accurate data are required on the fluke. Too little is known of its distribution in Poland. The same applies to the snails (Limnaea trunkatula) in which fluke larvae develop. These trematoda do not play a major role in Poland now, but will certainly take on greater significance with the development of sheep breeding. Likewise, nothing is known of the Oribatiae which are intermediate hosts in the development of Anoplocephalidae and other tapeworms.

Projects must be assigned to the chemical and pharmaceutical industries. The performance of this work on a larger scale will only be possible when the pharmaceutical industry produces on a significant scale such basic drugs as certain chlorinated hydrocarbons, pure bisulphide of carbon, phenothiazine, and sulfanilamides. However, production must not be limited to the manufacture of drugs developed abroad; Poland must also conduct research in this line.

Twenty-five years ago in Poland few people realized the significance of parasites. One of these was Colonel Zagrodzki, former head of the Veterinary Faculty of the Panstwowy Instytut Naukowy Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego (State Scientific Institute for Rural Husbandry) in Pulawy. In 1936, he created at the institute a Parasitology Division, headed by Dr Kurt Obitz. During his 3-year incumbency, Doctor Obitz made valuable contributions to the war on parasites. Professor-Doctor A. Trawinski is also one of those who realized the importance of parasitology. The accomplishments of Trawinski in the field of parasitological antigens in universally known. With the exception of this group, there was total indifference to the problem of parasitology in veterinary medicine.

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The place of parasitology in veterinary medicine improved after World War II. Work was begun at the zoological and parasitological research center at Wroclaw on parasites which attack sheep and on the effects of antigens on certain parasites. In addition, Janiszewski's work on parasitic fauna of fresh-water fish represented great advancement.

There is every reason to believe that the work of the Zoological and Parasitological Department established /at M. Curie - Sklodowska University?/ in Lublin after the war will take the proper course. Professor Z. Raabe, a student of the distinguished parasitologist Janicki, has headed this department for the past 2 years. Research work has been begun on the parasitic fauna of Lublin from an ecological standpoint.

Growing proof of the recognition of the importance of parasitology is the chapter on the parasites of young animals in the well-known manual by Professor Parnas, Schorzenia mlodych swierzat (Diseases of Young Animals).

After World War I, two parasitological departments were established at veterinary schools, one at the Akademja Medecyny Weterynaryjna (Academy of Veterinary Medicine) in Lwow, and the other a little later, in 1925, in Warsaw. The former was staffed with professors who were interested only in zoology; therefore, this department did not have much influence on the development of parasitology in Poland. An exception to this is the work of Professor G. Poluszynski on the classification of the larvae of the Stromgylus parasites in horses.

The zoological aspect was also the main interest of Prof-Dr Witold Stefanski when he took over the Zoological and Parasitological Department at Warsaw /University?/. Doctor L. Ejsmont, a student of Janicki, was laboratory assistant when the department was created. He was a helminthologist known for his work on trematoda. This work however, is a zoological study exclusively and has no application in veterinary medicine.

The first planned studies in applied parasitology were begun in 1934, when, at the suggestion of the Veterinary Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reform, Professor Stefanski and Doctor Obitz began work on the cattle gadfly in Poland. The two worked out data on the incidence and distribution of this pest in Poland, the distribution of the small bovine gadfly, and the means of controlling this pest. This broad joint project was undertaken in cooperation with all the powiat veterinarians.

During the war, great losses were caused by the parasitic itch (swierzb). Dissection of carcasses and field trips throughout the country testified to the importance of parasites in sheep diseases. Cattle often suffered from urinary bleeding from piroplasmosis (piroplazmoza), and the conditions of horses showed the importance of parasites in etiology. Severe nervous symptoms in pigs were quickly relieved after decontamination. The presence of chorioptes equi (swierzbowiec pecinowy) was frequently diagnosed incorrectly by physicians. One need only to keep in contact with the countryside to realize the importance of parasites in livestock diseases. At the moment there is an outbreak of Thelazia rhodesi in the vicinity of Pulawy, and nearly all the cattle in two villages are infected with this nematode, which causes blindness. This parasite can no longer be considered uncommon as heretofore, since clinical observations in the past years indicate that it is very common.

If the veterinary subsection of the Scientific Congress recognizes the important role of veterinary parasitology, it must come to the conclusion that parasitology must be separated from zoology and must be considered as a separate department of parasitology and contagious diseases. Parasitology should be grouped either with epizootiology, since the range of infections from parasites is almost the same as those caused by bacteria and virus, or with the clinical departments, since contagious diseases are classed as internal diseases. In defense of this latter view the example of the USSR may be cited, where parasitology is grouped with the clinical department.

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Parasitologists graduated by the higher schools will find work in the Faculty of Parasitology and Invasive Diseases of the PIW (Panstwowy Instytut Weterynaryjny, State Veterinary Institute), in the Research Center of Parasitology and Invasive Diseases, and in the four (for the present) Wojewodztwo Research Centers of Veterinary Hygiene. Considering the great amount of research work at the parasitological section of the PIW, the staff is too small. The number of workers is entirely inadequate if these workers are to be given the task of directing parasite control in their areas. The field parasitologist should be thoroughly trained at a well-staffed central office. Since the job of the Faculty of Parasitology of the PIW is to work on problems connected with invasive diseases, it is the job of the veterinary subsection to clearly define these projects.

The ultimate task of the Scientific Congress is to define the problems awaiting solution on the basis of the potentialities of a given branch of science. There are three parasitology research centers at universities and one at the PIW. The university centers have very little adequate supply of indispensable apparatus. The libraries are scantily endowed, and research is hampered, especially on the classification of fauna.

On the other hand, the PIW has more space, but its technical equipment is rather poor. Its literature on parasitology is limited. The staff of research assistants is entirely inadequate. The PIW center has the advantage of continuous contact with the field. The major shortcoming of the university centers is the lack of close contact with the clinics. On the whole, the clinicians resent the intrusion of the parasitologists into their clinics. They try to solve parasitological problems single handedly; lacking complete knowledge of the field, they contribute to the cult of random causality.

The veterinary subsection of the Scientific Congress should map a research program with allowance for personnel and technical capacities of the parasitological group. The Second Congress of the Polskie Towarzystwo Parazytologiczne (Polish Parasitological Society) adopted the following resolution:

1. "An effort must be made to study native parasitic fauna, its distribution and incidence, and the entire ecological complex."

Very little is known of the parasitic fauna of Poland. Not mentioning the vast body of information on the helminthological fauna of the USSR, Polish scientists know more about the helminthological fauna of Africa than about the fauna of Poland. Foreign textbooks do not even mention Poland in their geographic sections. The argument that Poland need not expend any energy on research on her own parasitic fauna since so much is known about the fauna of neighboring countries, is not realistic. The parasitologist, who often comes into contact with the phenomena wherein a certain parasite is common in one part of the country while it is entirely lacking in another, knows that these arguments are fallacious. For instance, the parasite Syngamus trachea, which attacks the windpipe of chickens, is common in Slask but rare in the central sections of the country. The parasitic fauna of dogs around Warsaw is somewhat different than that found around Pulawy. The small bovine gadfly appears only in a few powiats, etc. The parasite which attacks the eyes of cows was formerly thought to be an uncommon parasite, but today it appears to be common in certain areas of the country. Therefore, a systematic search of the country will assuredly turn up parasites which heretofore had been unknown.

All three departments are to carry on the above work with the cooperation of the Faculty of Parasitology of the PIW. This has been previously decreed at the meeting of the parasitological group.

2. "A knowledge of parasitic fauna together with the entire ecological complex will afford a better basis for understanding the dynamics of invasive diseases. Special emphasis should be placed on parasitic fauna of domestic animals and game, and on pests. Their regional distribution should be considered."

Both points of the resolution recommend research in the parasitic fauna of the country, however, Point 2 emphasizes the significance of parasites of domestic animals. Zaklad Zoologii i Parazytologii (Research Center of Zoology and Parasitology) in Warsaw is already working on part of this program. Further research is in progress. Knowledge of the regional distribution of parasites must be obtained and all the parasitological laboratories should take part in this research, especially those of the Wojewodztwo Research Centers of Veterinary Hygiene which have a parasitology staff.

3. "Research on the development of parasites should continue parallel to fauna research. It should be modeled after the research begun by the Janicki school. Such research yields methods of prevention along with the theoretical problems."

Although the development of the cycle of most of the parasites with practical significance is known, very often the appearance of the intermediate host in the development cycle of a given parasite depends on the latitude or other local conditions. Therefore, research is necessary on development of parasites in Poland. This undertaking should be entrusted to the university centers.

4. "A realization of the Six-Year Plan for livestock production requires the application of methods used by Soviet parasitology in the control of invasive diseases."

The PIW should be entrusted with the main role in the realization of Point 4. Because of lack of adequate personnel, main emphasis at this time should be directed at parasites which are the most injurious to cattle. The PIW, in cooperation with the Research Center of Zoology and Parasitology of the University of Warsaw, should make every effort to achieve the Point 4 of the resolution of the Second Congress of the Polish Parasitological Society by submitting subjects to the Scientific Congress which call for research into methods of preventing and combating the most menacing parasites of livestock.

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